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ABSTRACT

This booklet, one of a series featuring the Canadian provinces, presents a brief overview of Prince Edward Island and is suitable for teacher reference or student reading. Separate sections discuss geography, climate, history, early trade, development, agriculture, the potato industry, forests, fisheries, aquaculture, industry, tourism, energy, the arts, and the people. Specific topics include the great potential of the land for agricultural use, the early arrival of Europeans and Micmac Indians, and the colonization and early government of the island. The economic importance of agriculture, fisheries, local manufacturing, shipbuilding, and fox-farming is emphasized. Canada's first comprehensive development plan is briefly discussed with additional emphasis on the island's agriculture, potato industry, sawmills, lobster fishing, and oyster cultivation. Manufacturing and tourism are seen as increasingly important to the island, as is the recent initiative to develop new energy resources and actively promote energy conservation projects. The Charlottetown Confederation Centre of the Arts is seen as a major attraction to national and international artists. The final section describes the ancestral origins of the population and the determination by the islanders to protect their heritage. In addition, a simple map showing Canada's major cities and provinces is included. (LH)

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Prince Edward Island

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Prince Edward Island, Canada's smallest province, has always been called "the Island" by those who live there. The smallest of the ten provinces in area and population, it is 224 km long and 69 km wide at its broadest point, with a 1979 population of 123,000. There are roughly 567,000 hectares of land and most are under cultivation. No part of the island is more than 16 km from the sea.

Geography

Prince Edward Island is situated in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and is separated from the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick by the Northumberland Strait. The province's best known physical feature is its rich red soil, which is unusually deep and has a great potential for agricultural use provided it is properly treated. The island has strikingly even terrain — gentle rolling hills never higher than 150 m above sea level. The coastline is frequently indented by deep bays and long tidal inlets. In the east and south some of these inlets provide fine harbours, the best being at Charlottetown, the province's capital. On the north shore, troublesome sand dunes restrict the use of natural harbours to small boats. Most rivers are really "sea creeks" since the tides flow to their heads, where they meet modest streams flowing from the interior. There are few ponds or lakes of any size but the island has many saltwater lagoons enclosed by dunes.

Climate

Prince Edward Island has a relatively temperate climate, which is another important factor in its agricultural success. Winters are long but reasonably mild, springs are slow and chilly, summers are pleasantly cool and autumns normally late in the season and warm. Compared with other parts of the Atlantic region, the island is little troubled by fog and mist.

History

Jacques Cartier landed on the northwest tip of the island in July 1534 and described the land as "the most delightful that may be seen, and full of beautiful trees and plains . . ." Before the arrival of the Europeans, Micmac Indians regularly visited the island on summer hunting trips and it is possible that some settled permanently. The island was named after St. John and by 1632 was charted by Samuel de Champlain in a series of books he wrote about his journeys. In 1710, a number of farmers from Acadia (now Nova Scotia) settled along the Hillsborough River, which they later drained and developed for agriculture. In 1720 three ships from France arrived in Hillsborough Bay with more settlers. This development scheme was organized by Comte de Saint-Pierre, a nobleman of the court of Louis XV. With the help of carpenters and workers from nearby Cape Breton Island, the

settlers built a village at Port La Joye – the island's first capital. Another colony was set up in 1731 and included fisheries, a model farm, a forge and other enterprises. More Acadian immigrants came to the island following their expulsion from Nova Scotia and stayed there until 1758 when they were transported to France after the British conquest. Captain Samuel Holland then surveyed the island and influential petitioners were awarded sections of land through a lottery system. This absentee ownership policy dominated island affairs for nearly a century, and created much hardship for immigrants who became tenant farmers.

In 1850, the Liberal Party, formed by members of the earlier Reform Party, advocated responsible government for the island – an administration answerable to the island's legislature. Their opponents were forerunners of today's Conservative party. That same year the Liberals were elected and one year later the British government acceded to their demands for responsible government.

A Liberal Party government in 1853 passed the Land Purchase Act. This allowed the administration to purchase the land of proprietors willing to part with it, then resell to the tenants living on it.

The years from 1854 to 1865 were stormy as the island's legislature tried to assist the administration in buying out the remaining landlords, attempts that were vetoed by the British government. Land reform and questions of schools and railway building provided the controversial issues of the day.

On September 1, 1864 delegates from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Upper and Lower Canada met in Charlottetown to discuss proposals for the union of British North America. In 1867 the British North America Act was passed forming the Dominion of Canada and on July 1, 1873 Prince Edward Island joined the Confederation.

Early trade

In the first 20 years following Confederation, the island prospered. As before, its economy was centred on agriculture, fisheries, local manufacturing, and shipbuilding. The population increased and small industries thrived.

During the 1870s and 1880s there was a marked upswing in agricultural activity. Farmers sold their produce to merchants in Charlottetown and Summerside who shipped goods to the mainland for markets in central Canada. At the same time there was rapid growth in the island's fishing industry. The number of fishermen trebled and the number of vessels more than doubled. And the silver-black fox made many men rich before the industry collapsed in the 1930s. (By 1979, the fox-farming industry was making a modest comeback.) Between 1840 and

1870 the island shared in the shipbuilding boom of the Maritimes. However, by the 1880s steam power and iron construction spelt the decline of the wooden shipbuilding trade.

Development
The economic gap between central Canada and the Maritime provinces widened during and after World War II. A causeway to the mainland was promised and approaches were actually built, but the project went no further. Canada's first comprehensive development plan, signed in 1969 between the federal and provincial governments, made provisions for long-term economic, social and environmental programs. The plan opened up many possibilities which hitherto had not been considered.

Agriculture
Prince Edward Island is self-sufficient in grain production and will soon become an exporter. There are three grain elevators on the island. Cash crops include a wide variety of vegetables, notably turnips, cauliflower and broccoli. These are well suited to farms where whole families take part in cultivating and harvesting. The island's dairy herd numbers some 25,000 animals, which satisfies local needs and contributes to cheese and evaporated milk exports to the mainland. In recent years hog production has been a profitable adjunct on many farms.

Tobacco is a valuable export, but requires intensive cultivation and is vulnerable to weather damage. Less demanding are the strawberry and wild blueberry crops.

Potato industry
The potato crop is the economy's cornerstone. Potatoes thrive in the temperate climate and have been grown on the island since the early days of French settlement. The arrival of many Irish settlers after the 1830s added to the importance of the potato.

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, potato production was just one facet of mixed farming as practised throughout the island. In 1916 when a few strains of Irish Cobblers and Green Mountains — then the chief varieties — were found to be virtually free of disease, a seed potato certification program was instituted. That gave rise to the great seed potato industry. Varieties were grown not to be consumed, but to seed fields of table potatoes in Canada and around the world. Now farmers are relying on the processing industry, particularly the companies that freeze french fried potatoes and preserve new potatoes. Approximately one-half of the potato crop is processed.

Forests
Prince Edward Island originally was covered with woodland. The trees hindered early settlers, but were a boon

to shipbuilders of a later era. There are now 234,717 forested hectares on the island, half of which is white spruce, used mainly as firewood. Careful forest management is improving the quality of forest stands across the province.

Approximately 50 saw mills produce about 12 million board feet annually, resulting in an industry valued at $1.3 million. There are no pulp mills in the province: 30,000 cords of pulpwood are exported to mills in other provinces and abroad. The value of these exports is estimated at $800,000.

Fisheries

Island fisheries became prominent in the eighteenth century. Processing concerns, such as drying and fish-oil plants and canning factories, were responsible for the marketing of the province's most renowned resource, the lobster. By 1900 lobsters accounted for half the value of the annual catch. More than 200 small canneries were in operation.

Today lobster fishing is organized in districts, each with different rules affecting open seasons, minimum length, and size of trap permissible for licensed fishermen. Lobsters remain the mainstay of the fishing industry, although out of lobster season fishermen may catch groundfish (cod, redfish, hake and flounder), pelagic fish (mackerel and herring) or scallops dragged from the bottom. A number of fishermen prefer fishing for the giant bluefin tuna. Most of the latter are processed for export to Japan where red tuna meat is prized as a delicacy.

Aquaculture

Oyster cultivation is one aspect of scientific "aquaculture" which may bring significant economic benefits to the island. Oyster "spat" (baby oysters) are provided by a shellfish hatchery operated by the provincial government. The stock is cultivated and then transferred to oyster beds. Some of these public beds are controlled by the federal government while others are run co-operatively by the fishery and provincial government. Underwater farming of scallops, mussels, oysters, hard- and soft-shelled clams, Atlantic salmon, and trout and even sea plants, like Irish moss, is possible. Salmon and trout respond well to hatchery techniques and are generally a federal responsibility. Since shellfish production is a provincial matter, the island has introduced new species of mussels and scallops. Hard-shell clams are being reared at the province's shellfish hatchery for cultivation in suitable beds. Irish moss can be dried and refined to produce the substance carrageenin used as a stabilizer in food processing and other industries.

Industry

Prince Edward Island has about 150 manufacturing establishments employing approximately 3,000 people. The majority of the island's secondary industry is involved in the processing of agricultural and fisheries products although there has been continuing expansion into light manufacturing. Examples of manufacturing in the province are: boat building, commercial printing, dairy products, fiberglass products, metal fabricating, paint manufacturing, wool and cloth milling and production of agricultural implements.

Manufacturing is becoming increasingly important. The provincial government has established new industrial malls in Charlottetown and Summerside and has introduced incentive grant programs to help small industries throughout the province. Several of the firms that have located in the Charlottetown industrial site are involved with high-technology metal working. Fashion garments, electronic equipment and sunglasses are examples of products now being manufactured on the island.

Tourism

Tourism too, is important. Prince Edward Island is a superb holiday resort year-round. The island is a favourite spot for many mainland Canadians and thousands of visitors from the United States of America who appreciate the white sandy beaches, rolling green farmland and the opportunity to sample home cooking and enjoy lobster suppers. Although Cavendish National Park is the country's smallest, it is the second most popular in Canada. Two ferryboat services connect the island to the mainland and three scenic routes introduce visitors to the beauty of the province and its people.

Energy

Until 1977 the island relied on oil imports for 98 per cent of its energy needs. But the fast-rising cost of oil compelled the provincial government to develop new energy sources and actively promote energy conservation. Two submarine power cables linking the island to New Brunswick were laid in a seabed trench during the summer of 1977. At present consumption rates, the cable link provides 80 to 90 per cent of the island's minimum night load. The province is hampered by geography and limited population in its search for new energy sources. Some interesting projects are now underway. The "Ark", a self-sufficient life-supporting house that relies almost completely on solar and wind energy, opened in 1976. A wood gasification unit helps heat a correctional centre, and garbage from the city of Charlottetown will help provide the energy needs of the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital. One new school is fitted with solar panels and a roof-top windmill.

The arts

Lucy Maud Montgomery (1874-1942) is the province's best known literary figure. As the author of *Anne of Green Gables* and its sequels, which are still read throughout the world, she has made the island familiar to generations of readers. Each year thousands of visitors scour the island for locations described in the books. The most popular attraction is the "Green Gables" house, situated in Cavendish.

Milton Acorn, Prince Edward Island's leading poet, has done much to communicate to other Canadians the island's special character and the warmth of its people.

For most of its history the island had to rely on its own resources for its cultural expression. However, to commemorate the centenary of the 1864 Charlottetown Conference, the other provinces contributed funds towards constructing the Charlottetown Confederation Centre of the Arts. This cultural complex, the first to be built in Canada, includes a theatre, art gallery and library.

The 1965 summer festival featured a musical version of *Anne of Green Gables* and it has remained a sold-out favourite every season since then.

During the rest of the year, the Centre attracts many national and international performers, from ballet companies to rock stars, and provides a home base for Island performers. Among these is the Confederation Centre Boys Choir which has made several tours of regions of Canada and the United States of America.

The Charlottetown Centre art gallery is one of Canada's most prestigious and is famous for its rich collection of works by Robert Harris. His most notable commission was to paint a record of the 1869 Quebec conference — the well-known "Fathers of Confederation", painting. No other Island painter has achieved Harris's fame, but the province's attractions have long acted as a magnet to draw painters, writers and other creative artists.

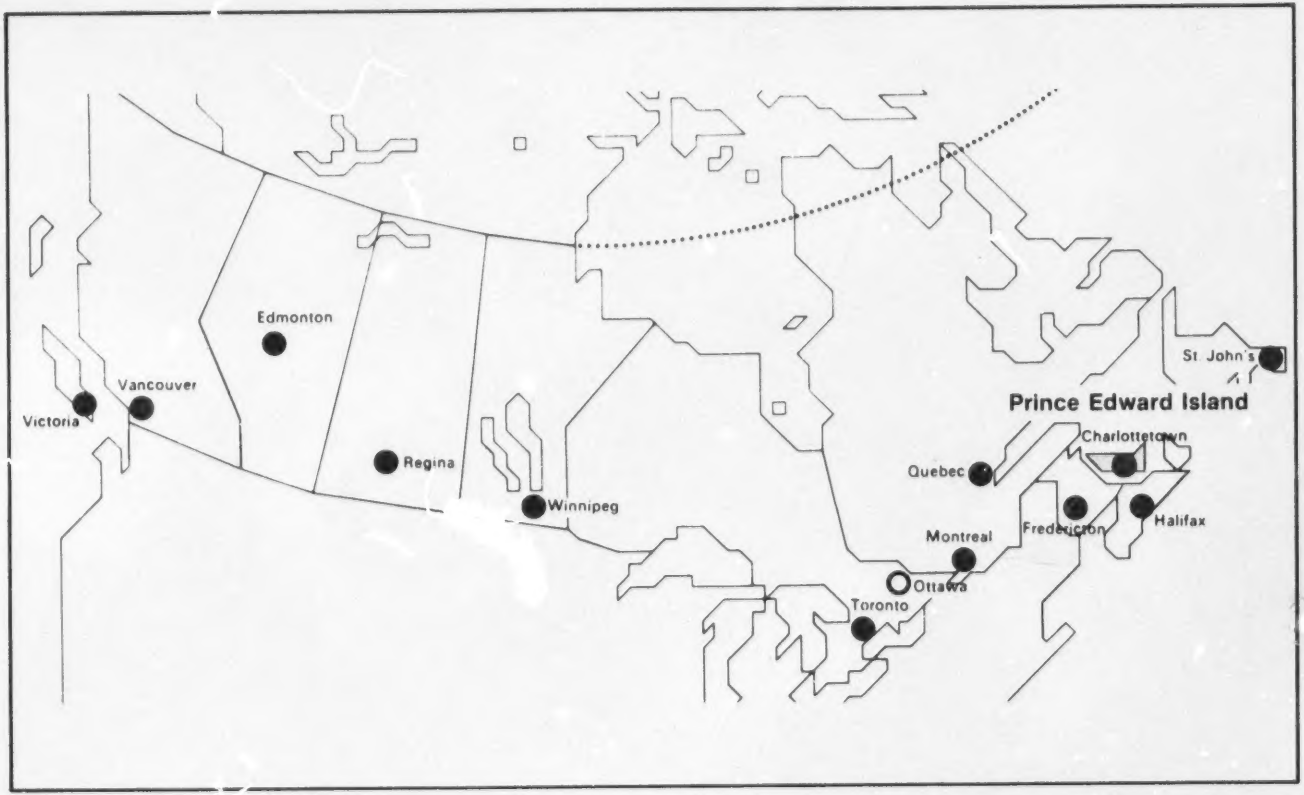
People

Prince Edward Island's population is approximately 123,000 (1979 estimate). About a third of the population lives on farms throughout the island, a third in hamlets and villages and the remainder in communities with more than 1,000 people. Charlottetown has 25,000 people, Summerside 10,000, but no other town has over 3,000. Charlottetown is the island's seat of government and educational centre and is commercially important as Prince Edward Island's chief port and banking centre. The harbour front restoration project and the relocation of the Federal Department of Veterans' Affairs from Ottawa to Charlottetown have revitalized the waterfront area.

Approximately 80 per cent of the population is of British ancestry and the majority of these are of Scottish descent. Approximately 17 per cent of the population is of French origin, though only about 6 per cent retain French as their native language.

There are about 500 Micmac Indians living on the Island. Many of them are involved in making handicrafts, particularly their traditional high-quality woven baskets of black ash.

The Acadians keep French culture alive and remain close to the church and loyal to their traditions. The anglophone population has undergone major changes in recent times owing to the mass communications which have broken down special loyalties to the community. Country fairs, however, are just as popular as they were a century ago: Islanders maintain their culture and are determined to protect their identity and safeguard their heritage.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